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IPS by () Date 11-30-78

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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ACTION MEMORANDUM

S/S *gk*

MAR 20 1978

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

TO: The Deputy Secretary
FROM: ARA - Terence A. Todman

F C T
*Ms. Cohen*Argentine Politicians' Request for AppointmentISSUE FOR DECISION

Whether to meet with five exiled Argentine former politicians who are seeking an appointment with you.

ESSENTIAL FACTORS

The Council on Hemispheric Affairs has written to you requesting an appointment at a time to be agreed upon for five exiled former Argentine politicians. The five -- Esteban Righi, a Minister of Interior under Campora, Santiago Diaz Ortiz, a former Peronist Deputy, Hector Sandler, a former independent deputy, Adolfo Gass, ex-Radical party deputy and Radical party ex-Senator, Hipolito Solari Yrigoyen -- are not resident in Argentina nor are they representative of the major Argentine political parties.

With the exception of Solari Yrigoyen, who met with you in June, the members of the group are considered inept (Righi and Sandler were credited with the irresponsible release of all prisoners, including known terrorists, following Campora's 1973 inauguration) or far to the left of the mainstream of their parties (Gass and Diaz Ortiz). None of the five were or are now major figures in the Argentine political world. They cannot be considered as spokesmen of the major parties, whose activities are suspended but whose leaders move freely in and out of Argentina.

I have also received a request from COHA to meet with the five. I intend to have them meet with ARA Deputy Assistant Secretary Frank McNeil, which is in line with our Embassy's advice on this matter (see attached cable).

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COHA originally intended for the Argentines to meet with you in early March; however, because of difficulties in getting the five together in Washington, COHA is now thinking of an early April meeting.

There are strong arguments for not meeting with the five Argentines.

-- You would give prestige to a group of generally discredited or unrepresentative politicians.

-- The action might anger the GOA and cause it to hold back on immediate improvements in the human rights field.

On the other hand:

-- A meeting with the five would underline the Administration's commitment to democratic regimes.

-- It would give an audience to individuals who have complained of the human rights violations in Argentina.

Recommendation:

That you not meet with the five and that you designate Deputy Assistant Secretary McNeil to meet with them when they formally request an appointment with you.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

Attachment:

Buenos Aires Cable No. 1399.

Drafted: ARA/ECA:JNBumpus:jc
3/15/78:x29166

Concurrence: HA:MBova (draft)

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ACTION
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CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 1399

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: ARGENTINE PARTICIPANTS IN DEMOCRATIC
OPTIONS CONFERENCE

REF: STATE 045443

1. SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO EMBASSY FILES, MOST OF THE ARGENTINES INVITED TO THE COHA-SPONSORED CONFERENCE ARE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN LEFTIST-LEANING, BUT FAR FROM SUBVERSIVE. SANTIAGO DIAZ ORTIZ AND HIFOLITO SOLARI IRIGOYEN WERE CLOSELY CONNECTED TO THE NOW OUTLAWED PERONIST YOUTH ORGANIZATION; ESTEBAN RIGHI WAS THE RATHER INEFFECTUAL COLLEAGUE OF HECTOR CAMPORA; HECTOR SANDLER HAS A QUIRKY CENTER-LEFT POLITICAL PAST; ADOLFO GAS IS NOT WELL KNOWN. SOLARI IRIGOYEN WAS RELEASED FROM PRISON AND EXPELLED FROM ARGENTINA IN MAY, 1977; SEVERAL OF THE OTHERS LEFT ARGENTINA BEFORE THE PRESENT MILITARY REGIME TOOK POWER. WE DO NOT BELIEVE A VISIT WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN WOULD BE USEFUL AT THIS TIME. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE BIO INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US:

(A) HECTOR SANDLER: FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UDELPA PARTY (NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE UNION OF THE ARGENTINE PEOPLE), A SELF-DESCRIBED CENTER-LEFT PARTY WHICH WAS FORMER PRESIDENT ARAMBURU'S POLITICAL VEHICLE; FORMER NATIONAL DEPUTY WHO WAS KNOWN AS AN ECCENTRIC, EGOCENTRIC AND PROBLEMATIC BUT POLITICALLY SAVVY LEGISLATOR. SANDLER WAS REPORTEDLY ON THE "TRIPLE A DEATH LIST" DURING THE PERONIST ADMINISTRATION AND IS NOW IN EXILE IN MEXICO, WHERE HE IS DIRECTOR OF THE ARGENTINES IN-EXILE NEWS-SHEET "TRIBUNA DEMOCRATICA." SANDLER SPOKE AT THE KARIN-MCGOVERN CONGRESSIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN WASHINGTON IN SEPTEMBER, 1977, WHERE HE CRITICIZED THE MILITARY REGIME'S FAILURE TO RETURN THE COUNTRY TO A DEMOCRATIC, ELECTED GOVERNMENT. SANDLER IS A LAWYER AND WAS IN THE AIR FORCE UNTIL 1956 BEFORE ENTERING POLITICS.

(B) SANTIAGO DIAZ ORTIZ: FORMER PERONIST DEPUTY WITH TIES TO PERONIST YOUTH, THE GROUP LATER REPUDIATED BY PERON WHICH PROVIDED CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF SYMPATHIZERS AND ACTIVISTS TO THE MOHTOHEROS. DIAZ ORTIZ RESIGNED ALONG WITH SEVEN OTHER LEFTIST PERONIST DEPUTIES IN 1974, WHEN PERON STEPPED UP ATTACKS AGAINST LEFTIST TERRORISTS AND TRIED TO REFORM THE PENAL CODE TO COMBAT TERRORISM. WE HAVE AN ADDITIONAL NOTATION IN OUR FILES THAT HE WAS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE "LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE FOR THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS"--PRESUMABLY DURING HIS PERIOD AS DEPUTY.

(C) ADOLFO GASS: FORMER NATIONAL DEPUTY OF THE RADICAL PARTY; AS VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES' FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, HE CALLED ON ARGENTINE MILITARY FORCEABLY TO OCCUPY THE MALVINAS ISLANDS. GASS IS ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE

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LAUNCHED IN CARACAS IN AUGUST, 1977, WHICH CALLED FOR THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM IN ARGENTINA. HE IS ALSO PRESIDENT OF AN "ARGENTINE SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE" SETUP TO OPPOSE THE CURRENT REGIME.

(D) ESTEBAN RIGHI: FORMER INTERIOR MINISTER IN HECTOR CAMPORA GOVERNMENT IN 1973; A LEFTIST LAWYER WITH CLOSE TIES TO THE CAMPORA FAMILY, RIGHI ASSUMED HIS POST AT AGE 35 AND WAS CONSIDERED TO BE INEXPERIENCED AND EXPENDABLE (SEE PARAGRAPH 3 BELOW). HE LEFT ARGENTINA IN THE FACE OF RISING RIGHT-WING VIOLENCE IN OCTOBER, 1974 AND SETTLED IN EXILE IN MEXICO. RIGHI HAS WRITTEN FOR HECTOR SANDLER'S EXILE NEWS-SHEET TRIBUNA DEMOCRATICA, PUBLISHED IN MEXICO.

(E) HIPOLITO SOLARI IRIGOYEN: FORMER SENATOR FOR RADICAL PARTY AND DEFENSE LAWYER WITH STRONG TIES TO LABOR GROUPS, SOLARI IRIGOYEN WAS IDENTIFIED WITH THE LEFT WING OF THE UCR AND WITH THE PERONIST YOUTH, AND HE SERVED AS DEFENSE LAWYER FOR ACCUSED TERRORISTS. SOLARI IRIGOYEN WAS OBJECT OF SEVERAL TERRORIST (RIGHT-WING?) ATTACKS AND BOMBINGS IN THE PAST; HE WAS ABDUCTED, DISAPPEARED AND LATER REAPPEARED IN CUSTODY OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT FROM AUGUST, 1976 TO MAY, 1977, WHEN HE WAS EXPelled TO VENEZUELA AS RESULT OF STRONG INTERNATIONAL (INCLUDING U.S.) PRESSURE. SOLARI IRIGOYEN WAS

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ACCUSED OF "DEFENDING TERRORISTS" BY THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT BUT HAS A REPUTATION AS A DEDICATED DEMOCRAT AND FIRM BELIEVER IN PEACE AND DUE PROCESS. HE VISITED WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER, ASSISTANT SECRETARIES TOOMAN AND DERIAN ON VISIT TO U.S. IN JULY 1977. (GOA PROTESTED AGAINST USG OFFICIALS RECEIVING SOLARI IRIGOYEN, WHOM THEY IDENTIFIED AS A "TERRORIST ACCOMPLICE.") SOLARI IRIGOYEN HAS SPOKEN OUT AGAINST THE MILITARY REGIME AND HIS OWN SUFFERINGS IN DETENTION IN EUROPE AND IN SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES. FOR EXAMPLE, HE WAS REPORTED IN PARIS AS SAYING THAT THE FRENCH NUNS WERE KIDNAPPED BY "ARGENTINE PARAMILITARY FORCES" LIKE 15,000 OTHER PRISONERS IN ARGENTINA. IN JULY, 1977, HOWEVER, AT A EUROPEAN LATIN AMERICAN CONFERENCE IN MEXICO HE REFUSED TO SIGN A STATEMENT CONDEMNING ARGENTINA BECAUSE MONTONEROS--WHOM HE REJECTS FOR THEIR VIOLENT PRACTICES AND POLITICAL AIMS--WERE REPRESENTED AT THE MEETING.

3. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN'S MEETING WITH THIS GROUP WOULD NOT BE WORTH THE BAD FEELING IT WOULD STIR UP WITHIN THE GOA AND AMONG ARGENTINES WHO LOOK BACK WITH DISMAY ON THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL HISTORY DURING THE TIME THESE MEN WERE PROMINENT. ALSO, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SOLARI IRIGOYEN, WHO HAS BEEN RECEIVED BEFORE AT A HIGH LEVEL IN THE DEPARTMENT, THE OTHER POLITICIANS DO NOT HAVE MUCH OF A POLITICAL FOLLOWING IN ARGENTINA. RIGHI IS REMEMBERED BY OBJECTIVE POLITICAL OBSERVERS AS HAVING BEEN UNWISE ENOUGH TO ACCEPT THE INTERIOR MINISTRY UNDER CAMPORA AND TO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED, AT LEAST BY HIS ACQUIESCE, IN THE FATEFUL DECISION TO EMPTY THE JAILS OF A LARGE NUMBER OF TERRORISTS ON CAMPORA'S INAUGURAL DAY. RIGHI--WHETHER RIGHTFULLY OR WRONGFULLY--TOOK THE RAP FOR THIS DECISION, WHICH LED TO A WAVE OF TERRORIST BLOODLETTING THE SAME DAY, EVER SINCE USED BY THE ARGENTINE MILITARY AS JUSTIFICATION FOR RESPONDING WITH A COUNTER-TERROR OF THEIR OWN. ALL OF THE FIVE ARE POLITICIANS OF THE LEFT WHO, WHILE CERTAINLY NOT EXTREMISTS THEMSELVES, MAINTAINED, FOR WHATEVER REASON, CERTAIN POLITICAL CONNECTIONS TO GROUPS RECOGNIZED AS ADVOCATES OF VIOLENCE. TO THE CURRENT REGIME AND A GREAT MANY ARGENTINES THIS IS TANTAMOUNT TO BEING A SYMPATHIZER OR AGENT OF TERRORISM. SHOULD THERE APPEAR TO BE IMPERATIVE REASONS THAT THE GROUP BE RECEIVED IN THE DEPARTMENT, WE RECOMMEND THIS BE ACCOMPLISHED AT LOWER THAN THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY'S LEVEL.

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